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All the right moves

FOR BRIGHTENING THE SKIN, FOR DE-PUFFING FACE AND BODY, AND FOR BETTER IMMUNITY ALL ROUND, LYMPHATIC DRAINAGE IS THE SMART BEAUTY PROTOCOL WITH THE SCIENCE TO BACK UP ITS CLAIMS

Chances are you've already dabbled in lymphatic drainage. If you think not, consider the facial massage demo you followed online during lockdown or the jade roller you bought because everyone did... along with a gua sha stone, which became TikTok's most searched beauty term last year. Social media's hot new trend is, as is so often the case, not new at all, but rooted in ancient practices that were developed for good reason. That reason being the revving up of the lymphatic system.

Possibly one of the most undervalued of our bodies' many awe-inspiring functional networks, the lymph is part of our immune system and helps protect us from disease and disability. Its many definitions (among them 'the body's watering and waste drainage system', 'detox plant' and 'centre for disease control') give a clue as to

how crucial this vast network of channels, ducts and nodes, sitting right under the skin, really is. Its job is to bathe cells in liquid that facilitates delivery of nutrients and oxygen from the bloodstream. But it's also in charge of transporting foreign pollutants, metabolic waste and toxins away from the cells and into the body's toxin-processing stations – your liver and kidneys. The lymph and circulatory systems work together, but while blood has a pump (your heart), which moves it around the body, lymph fluid has to somehow stay in motion without. It relies entirely on movement, muscle contractions, gravity and breath to keep flowing. If you need a bit of a push to take some more exercise, consider that a clogged, stagnant lymph system is involved in 70% of all chronic disease, says Donna Strong in her book *Love Your Lymph* (Vital Living Publishing). Or heed lymphovascular medicine specialist Professor Peter Mortimer, who says: 'Lymph fluid carries immune cells to our lymph glands, where all acquired immunity against infections and vaccinations occurs. Hence, without a working lymph system, we would not succeed in overcoming infections such as Covid-19.'

Limber up that lymph, however, and you'll reap not only the health benefits, but the pleasure of clear, glowing skin, which is devoid of puffiness. With the multitude of beauty boons extending to acne control (lymph drainage helps draw impurities from the skin) and rosacea relief (rosacea is linked to impaired immune function, while lymph drainage boosts immunity), many beauty treatments quietly include work on the lymph. You just won't always realise it because 'instant sculpting' and 'line-plumping' techniques sound much more seductive than moving toxic waste from under the skin. Here's *Red's* pick of the most effective lymph-moving treatments; some to carry out in a matter of minutes at home, some to enjoy at the hands of a skilled practitioner. Your body and your face will thank you for doing all or any of them...



1 *Movement and massage*

Cost: Free

Moving around more and simply getting in your recommended 10,000 steps a day will have an immune-boosting effect by way of stimulating your lymph, as well as countless other health benefits. 'Do anything that elevates your heart rate on a daily basis; jumping up and down, bouncing while standing, stretching, or doing inversions (lying on your back with your legs up against a wall is just as good as a handstand),' says Jules Willcocks, founder of Body Ballancer lymphatic massage technology. She also recommends slow, deep breathing for moving lymph fluid around, and drinking water. Water makes up 96% of lymph fluid and it needs constant replenishing. Willcocks favours downing two litres a day to keep your lymph happy. As for a free beauty boost, facialist and massage therapist Guendalina Gennari starts the day with this simple face de-puffer: 'Apply a little face oil for "slip" and, starting from the collarbone, work towards the backs of the ears making little strokes with a flat hand (use your right hand to do the left side of the neck and vice versa),' she says. 'Do the same from the centre of your chin, and from the nasolabial folds outwards. Then work from the inner eye corner out to the temples and from the centre of the forehead to the hairline. Repeat each movement five times.'

'MANY BEAUTY TREATMENTS QUIETLY INCLUDE WORK ON THE LYMPH'

3 *Body brushing*

Cost: £21

Body brushing is a deceptively simple but effective way to keep your lymph moving and cellulite at bay. Brushes can be found for under £10, but it's best to choose one with firm, natural bristles, such as the **Elemis Body Detox Skin Brush**, £21. It takes a minute or two to do your entire body before showering; easy enough to become a habit. Using long, light strokes (too much pressure means you'll bypass the lymph), work your way up your legs towards the groin. Then, brush from the lower trunk, back and hands towards your collarbones, and from the neck down to the collarbones (you have lymph nodes in your inner elbows and knees, in your armpits and groin and behind your ears, but the largest 'drainage portals' are just under the clavicles). The whole thing should feel tingly, not scratchy, and should leave you feeling pleasantly invigorated.

2 *A gua sha*

Cost: From £10

These elongated heart-shaped pebbles can set you back as much as £155, but inexpensive ones, such as **Green People's Jade Gua Sha Massage Tool**, £13.50, are just as good, and the material doesn't matter as long as it's smooth. Professionals use their gua sha vigorously to lift and 'scrape' skin, but at home, we should only use it with the lightest touch for lymph drainage, says Gennari. 'It should be held almost flat as you glide it along the skin, which shouldn't redden; anything that tears or pulls at the skin is counter-productive. Use plenty of oil or, if you have oily skin, a mild cleansing milk, and move the stone always from the centre of the face to behind the ears and down to the collarbone, where the lymph nodes are. Instagram demos are handy; Gennari's are at [@guendalinatheskinsculpter](#). She also likes cryo sticks (ice cold metal balls on sticks) for the same purpose, rolling them outwards from the centre of your face. 'The choice in at-home facial massage tools can be a bit overwhelming,' she says, 'but these balls are soothingly cold, so particularly good for sensitive skin.' At *Red*, we like **Oxygen Boutique Cryo Facial Tools**, £55.



4 *CACI Eye Revive*
Cost: £40
Muscle-toning
microcurrent
treatments
such as CACI

(caci-international.co.uk) often feature a lymphatic drainage protocol: 'It ensures there's no excess fluid obstructing access to the muscles, as that would compromise the lifting and toning results we're after,' says holistic skincare expert Gemma Clare (gemmaclare.com). CACI's 30-minute Eye Revive treatment involves not just microcurrent probes to gently contract and strengthen orbital muscles for an 'eye-opening' effect, you also get an extensive lymph drainage massage to tone and smooth skin, using serum-infused rollers. Eyes look significantly more perky afterwards.

An at-home alternative is the **Foreo Bear** facial toning device, £279, which emits microcurrents to tone and sonic vibrations to 'shake' stagnant fluids into action. Passing it over skin for a few minutes a day, always working from the inside out, can significantly de-puff and tone both the eyes and face as a whole. Also useful: Sculpting T-bars, such as **Skin Gym's Beauty Lifter Vibrating T-bar**, £64. They don't tone muscle, but their sonic vibrations work to wake up the lymph.



5 *Guendalina Gennari My Sculptural Face Lift*
Cost: £110

A trained pair of hands can truly resculpt a face. London-based Guendalina Gennari works on the skin as well as the muscles and ligaments that hold muscles in position. This plumps connective tissues, frees any adhesion of muscle fibre and connective tissue (fascia), so you look less drawn, and achieves a visible lift over the course of an hour. 'I always start with lymphatic drainage before moving on to more vigorous massage techniques to ensure the nodes are open and active enough to receive the lymph fluid and detoxify the face or body,' she says. 'This also prevents puffiness the day after the treatment.' It also promotes brighter, more even-toned and less congested skin, alongside a more toned and sculpted look.

6 *Endosphères Therapy*
Cost: From £90 to £1,440

Endosphères Therapy (endospheres.com) is a massage technique with a roller device involving silicone spheres that exert 'compressive microvibration'. First developed to treat lymphoedema in hospitals, it's a hi-tech pummelling that targets muscles, circulation and the lymph all at the same time. Don't expect it to be relaxing; delicate and pain-free it isn't, though while you might feel black and blue, there's thankfully never any actual bruising. It also makes heavy legs feel much lighter. For the best results in terms of excess fluid drainage, cellulite reduction and a more sculpted look, 12 sessions are recommended (at roughly £1,440 for the course).

7 *HydraPresso at the Waterhouse Young Clinic*
Cost: £350

This lymph-loving 'power hour' combines a Hydrafacial to decongest, exfoliate and plump facial tissues, and a pressotherapy session to drain the body of stagnant lymph and stress. You don a sort of helmet-less space suit called a Body Ballancer, inside which inflating air chambers move fluids and oxygen towards lymph nodes, relieving swelling, bloating and fatigue. Meanwhile, the face is treated with a device boasting a 'vortex' tip that blasts skin with jets of active serum and applies gentle suction to 'hoover out' impurities and perform lymph drainage. Elsewhere in the UK, you can book these treatments separately. Hydrafacials cost from £130 (hydradfacial.co.uk). Hour-long Body Ballancer pressotherapy sessions start at £70 (bodyballancer.co.uk).

8 *Body Ballancer*
Cost: £7,800

Alternatively, you could join the likes of Jennifer Aniston and Chrissy Teigen, and buy your very own Body Ballancer 505 pressotherapy suit. It comes up to just below your chest, and you simply lie down in it while its 24 air chambers consecutively inflate and deflate in a mechanical imitation of the so called 'Vodder' manual lymph drainage technique. It feels hypnotic and utterly relaxing, and the body emerges visibly drained – in a good way. As the lymph needs life-long attention (you can't permanently 'fix' it), this really is the ultimate investment in your wellbeing – even if it is the price of a small car!